

Post–World War II Trauma and Memory in Shirley Hazzard’s The Great Fire

Priyanka Pandey

Department of English

Awadhesh Pratap Singh University, Rewa (M.P.)

Abstract: *Shirley Hazzard’s The Great Fire (2003) is a profound literary meditation on the psychological, emotional, and moral consequences of World War II. Rather than depicting the battlefield directly, Hazzard explores the lingering trauma of war through memory, silence, displacement, and restrained emotional expression. This research paper examines how post–World War II trauma manifests in the lives of characters such as Aldred Leith, Helen Driscoll, and Peter Exley, focusing on memory as both a burden and a means of survival. Drawing upon trauma theory, narrative analysis, and historical context, the paper argues that The Great Fire represents trauma not as overt suffering but as an enduring condition shaping identity, relationships, and moral consciousness. Hazzard’s subtle narrative technique, her emphasis on ethical responsibility, and her depiction of love as a healing yet fragile force reveal the long shadow of war on personal and collective memory. The novel ultimately suggests that while trauma cannot be erased, memory—when allied with compassion and integrity—offers the possibility of meaning and renewal in a fractured postwar world.*

Keywords: Shirley Hazzard, The Great Fire, post–World War II literature, trauma, memory, love and war, postwar fiction